

History Research Center

White Rose

A group of student rebels against Nazism centered at the University of Munich in 1943. The leaders were Hans Scholl, a medical student age 25, and his sister Sophie, a philosophy student age 21, who both attended the university. They maintained contact with anti-Nazi conspirators in Berlin, and through their "White Rose Letters," as their writings were referred to, they spread their anti-Nazi message to other universities. In February 1943 the *gauleiter* of Bavaria, who had been provided a file of White Rose Letters by the Gestapo, spoke to the University of Munich student body, announcing that males unfit for military duty would be given other tasks and luridly urging females to reproduce for the Fatherland—offering his adjutants to do the fathering. The offended students ejected the *gauleiter* and his Gestapo and SS guards from the hall and staged a street demonstration against the Nazis—the first public protest against the Nazis since they had come to power in January 1933. The Scholls began to distribute pamphlets agitating for a student uprising. On February 19, a building superintendent who saw them disbursing pamphlets from a balcony betrayed the Scholls to the Gestapo. They were arrested and beaten (Sophie's leg was broken). Tried in a People's Court, they were found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. Both were hanged. A few days following their execution, several other students and the rebels' mentor Kurt Huber, a philosophy professor, were executed. The White Rose group in Hamburg, which was tentatively planning to blow up bridges there, suffered a similar fate, with 30 of its members being executed.

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